

THE QUIVER

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"Give me a hand with this woman here!"—p. 277.

ESTHER WEST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "PEGGY OGLIVIE'S INHERITANCE."

CHAPTER XXXVI.—BYE-PLAY.

MEANWHILE, Esther had reached young Mrs. West's fashionable mansion in — Street, and had been admitted behind the scenes to witness the bye-play in which most of what is really interest-

ing in human life takes place. Well-dressed people congregate at parties, crowd together at places of amusement, and stream along the streets of the city, but it is not in public places that their real characters

come into play, that their real histories are to be learnt; and yet in such places the bye-play is going on continually for such as have eyes to see it. Every human being in a crowd would be interesting if one only knew enough about him, or her, to give significance to the attitude, the expression, the act of the moment. It is the staple of humanity that is really interesting, not the exceptional growths of it. The great people, the clever people whom you covet to know, are, perhaps, not a whit more entertaining than your humdrum next-door neighbours, if you were gifted with the power of understanding them.

All three sisters were together in Kate's dressing-room when Esther arrived, and they were all engaged in the duties of the toilette. "This is like old times," said Milly, as Esther helped her to the completion of hers, for her dress was only a modification of that which she had worn at her wedding, which with care and little party-going had lasted until now. And yet it was very unlike the old times, when the three sisters, and Esther, too, had dressed alike and thought alike, or at least when the substance of their thoughts, like the substance of their garments, was of the same texture. Now both were alike widely different. Milly was the least changed. She had blossomed into motherhood, that was all; she still did "looking good" to perfection, especially when she carried Esther up-stairs to admire her boy, and took him in her lap, heedless of white silk and laces.

Kate arrayed herself with greater elaboration in a dress of green and white brocade, which in its stiffness and splendour revived the mode of the youth of our grandmothers; and when the sunny head and Clytë-like shoulders, with just a little too much of the fair skin visible, rose from their sheath of white and green, she looked as handsome a young matron as any in Belgravia.

Constance, on the other hand, wore a dress of black velvet, up to the throat and down to the wrists, relieved only by collar and cuffs of lace.

"How nice you look," she said, kissing her sister's neck.

"I am sorry I can't return the compliment," said Kate. "I don't like that funereal-looking dress of yours; it makes you look as grim as possible."

"I mean to be grim," said Constance, in her tone of light mockery; "I am the old maid of the family, and I mean to protest against the vanities of you young matrons."

"How can you talk such nonsense, Connie?" said her sister. "You are not three-and-twenty, and you speak as if you were twice that age. Besides, you will be more conspicuous in that black dress than I shall be in this one; and I know somebody who will single you out in the crowd," she added, smiling.

Just then a voice was heard calling out, half way up the stair, "Are you not ready yet?" It was

Harry, who had got out of patience pacing up and down the drawing-room alone.

"Go down, some of you, and keep him company," said Kate, looking annoyed, and Constance drew Esther's arm within her own and obeyed.

Harry wheeled round in the middle of his promenade, and hailed Esther with pleasure. She was something fresh to look at for the time, and he did look at her, till she could hardly help laughing.

"You are looking remarkably well," he said. "I should have thought you would be fagged to death in that horrid school."

"No, I am not at all fagged, as you call it. I am sometimes heartily tired; but I like my work, and begin again fresh every morning. I don't call that fagging."

"No," said Constance, "certainly not; when you're fagged you begin by being tired."

"I know I'm tired enough of this sort of thing," said Harry, dolefully.

"What sort of thing?" said Esther, laughing, apparently not thinking the roseate young gentleman a fit object of condolence.

"Of party-going and party-giving," he replied.

"You're a little impatient, I fear," said Constance. "Your first season has hardly begun; what will you be before it is over—what before you have gone through another, and yet another of the same?"

There was a ring of real weariness in her voice as she spoke in her lightest mood, that made Esther look at her and for the first time observe that she looked sadder than of old.

"Oh, I couldn't stand it," he cried, "and I won't try. I've had enough of it already. It's the same thing over and over again. Everybody says the same thing to everybody else, and of course they mean nothing. That's all you get for listening. And if you talk"—"Which you're pretty certain to do," said Constance, in a parenthesis—"nobody listens. I see them looking past me into all the corners of the room, in search of somebody they want to see, I suppose. Such people don't interest me a bit."

"What does interest you?" asked his sister-in-law, with a little covert sarcasm. "Everything by turns, and nothing long," she added, answering her own question.

Esther listened to the little sparring match with serious concern. "You are tired because you have nothing to do, Harry," she said. "If I were you I would go into one of the professions yet."

"I think I shall go back to Australia," said Harry, carelessly. "I have been speaking to Kate about it."

Constance started. "Indeed," she said, "and what does Kate say?"

"Oh, she won't go with me."

"Then, of course, you won't go?"

"Why? I think I shall. She can stay at home till I come back."

"Go without Kate!" said Constance, indignantly. "Is that all you care for her?"

The scene was becoming quite painful to Esther, when Kate in all her splendour sailed into the room.

Constance, in terror, changed the subject abruptly to Milly's baby, saying she had left him sleeping like an angel, if angels ever slept.

"I wish we had a baby," remarked Harry, discontentedly—a speech at which Kate's face became for a moment almost convulsed, and Constance looked as if she could have bitten her tongue for her innocent but unfortunate speech.

"What a dreadful misery it is," she took an opportunity of saying to Esther a little later. "These two have ceased to care for one another, and I don't know—cannot even guess—how it will end."

At length the company began to arrive, and everybody became smooth and smiling; everybody but Constance, who had not the faculty of clearing her brow and brightening up her face at command, and looked dismal accordingly. It was a very gay little gathering, consisting of the youth and fashion of the higher middle class, treading close on the heels of the aristocracy in culture and refinement, and sufficiently aware of the fact to be rather shy than otherwise of any stray member of the great families who found his way into their circle, though ready enough to respect a man of rank on any other ground than that of birth.

Their weak point was certainly their women. Esther was by far the finest woman in the room. Kate, her real beauty always rather lost in a crowd, and overpowered by her dress, passed unnoticed among other dresses equally handsome. Constance was looking harsh and gloomy. The other girls in the room were either too heavy—as if, to speak plainly, they were overfed—or they were pale and feeble, as if from inertness and want of exercise.

But Esther looked superb. All over the room the eye followed the majestic and yet light figure, and rested on the sweet and yet animated face. She was evidently finding the party very interesting indeed.

The Carringtons were early, but the pastimes had already commenced, and Mr. Carrington had nothing better to do than to watch the unconscious Esther, from the back of his mother's chair, where he had stationed himself. Then, as soon as that fit was over, he went straight up to Constance, and, to his mother's extreme satisfaction, chatted with her most perseveringly.

"Why don't you speak to Esther?" said Constance, at length. "Your mother has been quite cordial to her."

That perverse young gentleman had been longing for nothing else the whole evening. But he was one of those people who can never take the happiness within their reach—one of those who will rather have nothing, than have only a portion of that

which they desire. There was always some remote conclusion, some delicate reserve in his mind, which hindered him from acting on those around him.

Constance's words gave him the impulse to act. He went up to Esther immediately, and before long launched into a serious topic of talk.

It was something worth seeing, to an acute observer, the intense seriousness with which Benjamin Carrington went through that *tête-à-tête*. And it was a serious enough matter to him, as such things often are. He had once more placed himself within reach of an influence powerful as the attraction which keeps the planets in their orbits. But it was not the seriousness of thought which he felt. Thoughtful as he was, all thought had forsaken him. It was the seriousness of feeling. They kept up the conversation to the last, and when the evening was over he felt almost powerless to quit her side.

He had contrived to let her know that for him the enjoyment of the evening had but begun, and the knowledge was strangely sweet to her. It was dangerous too, and she felt it—felt the gulf which circumstance had placed between them, with a sudden revulsion of feeling which chilled her tone as she said, "Excuse me; I must go immediately."

He expressed his regret almost too strongly.

"I am like Cinderella," she added; "I must fly when the clock strikes twelve. My mother is sitting up for me."

"You will take some refreshment first," he said. The subtle grace and tenderness of his bearing towards her was exerting its influence upon Esther. Her impulse was to resist it, to fly from it. And he, he was pressing to her lips the cup he himself had drank of, which, when once tasted, rouses a thirst which nothing else will quench.

It was past the time when Esther's cab was ordered, and she was becoming quite anxious for its arrival. Pair after pair thronged the supper-room, and among them came Harry, with Mrs. Carrington on his arm. They came up to where Esther stood, with Mr. Carrington by her side, and when Harry had helped Mrs. Carrington, Esther contrived to whisper to him her anxiety to get home.

He offered at once to see if her cab had come, which was what she wanted; and, bidding mother and son a sweet but stately good-bye, she crossed the hall to the cloak-room, and was ready in a few minutes. Her cab, however, was not to be heard of for any amount of shouting and calling. Harry, of course, was making a tremendous fuss about it. He was assured that, in all probability, it would not make its appearance at all, cabby having been paid his fare, and not being likely to inconvenience himself by concluding the bargain. A waiter came back, blue-nosed and breathless, to say that there were no cabs to be had. The streets were dangerous, and they had been led home. And Esther, in sad perplexity, was standing in the hall, when, Mrs. Car-

rington's carriage having been announced, that lady, leaning on her son's arm, came out and stood beside her, while Mr. Carrington got a furred cloak from the footman and carefully wrapped her up.

Harry jumped at the solution of his difficulty. "It's all right," he whispered Esther; and before she could interfere to prevent him, he had asked the Carringtons to drop her on their way. There was no getting out of it for any of them. Mrs. Carrington was too much a woman of the world to do anything that she could not do with ease and grace, and she could not have refused with either.

"With pleasure," she replied.

"We shall be most happy," echoed her son; and for himself he replied truthfully.

It was certainly not much out of their way; but it seemed to Mr. Carrington that they were hardly seated in the soft-rolling carriage, when they came to a stop. He could have wished it to go on for ever, while from his dark corner he could see opposite to him, in the light of the carriage lamps, that sweet, earnest face. He was drinking the charmed cup to its very dregs to-night, and to-morrow there would be the fatal thirst.

The carriage had come to a stop—not smoothly, as it ought to have done, but with a shock, and a stumbling, and slipping of horses' feet, and an exclamation from the coachman. The next minute Mr. Carrington was standing on the snowy pavement.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

PHILIP'S HURT.

"STAY where you are, mother," cried Mr. Carrington; "there is no danger whatever."

Esther had alighted unassisted, and was about to help her to descend the steps of the carriage, under the apprehension that an accident had occurred.

An accident had occurred, but not to the carriage, about which Mrs. Carrington was solicitous. The old lady resumed her seat, and called to her son, "Is there anything wrong?"

It was the coachman who made the answer: "It's only a man knocked down, ma'am."

Mr. Carrington was at that moment engaged, along with the footman, in lifting the prostrate form, while Esther, coming forward, uttered a suppressed cry.

"Had you not better come away, Benjamin?" exclaimed the old lady, again thrusting out her head impatiently.

But Benjamin neither heard nor heeded.

"Carry him into my mother's house," Esther had said; and Mr. Carrington and the footman followed her with the insensible Philip, while she led the way thither.

They set him on the little sofa in the parlour, and Mary, who had thrown aside a heap of homely needlework, was swift to bring a pillow and lay him down there. It was not long before he came to him-

self sufficiently to open his eyes, and try to raise himself and to speak.

It was a curious group on which Philip opened his eyes. There stood Mary Potter at his feet, and beside her an elegant-looking young man in evening dress. By his side knelt Esther in the same gay attire, and in the background hovered the footman, not knowing what to make of the scene before him, but waiting his master's orders with his air of accustomed formal seriousness.

Philip contrived to raise himself, but it was with a groan that he did so; and as he uttered it, a red stream burst from his death-pale lips. Nearly as pale as himself, Esther held her white handkerchief to them for a moment, till he took it from her hand. He did not thank her; but his eyes rested on her lovingly, and they had a wonderful power of expressing lovingkindness.

"Where are you hurt?" said Mr. Carrington, gently.

"Here," he replied, faintly, laying his other hand on his side.

"Can you tell me where to find the nearest surgeon?" said Mr. Carrington, turning to Mary.

"Take me to the hospital," said Philip, now fully roused; "I have no one to care for me."

"We all care for you," said Mary. "We will not let you go."

"If he is able, it is the best thing that he could do," said Mr. Carrington.

Philip rose to his feet. "I am quite able; it is all here," he said, still holding his side.

"Some of the ribs are broken," said Mr. Carrington, after having felt within Philip's vest.

To Esther it sounded very dreadful, and she gave a pitiful sob.

"Drive your mistress home," said Mr. Carrington, turning to the footman; "and come back here for me, as quickly as possible." Then, taking further thought, he followed the man out of the house. It was more than likely that his mother might refuse to go on without him.

He hastened up to the carriage window, and Mrs. Carrington burst forth impatiently, "I thought you were never coming back. I am perishing with cold sitting here."

"I am sorry you have been kept waiting, mother," he said, gently. "You can drive home now, and send the carriage back for me."

"Are you not coming with me?" she exclaimed, in astonishment.

"I must stay and look after this poor man a little," he replied.

"Can't the police look after him?" she rejoined.

"He is very likely tipsy—these sort of people always are. What was he doing out at this time of night?"

"He is not tipsy, mother; and he has been hurt in trying to do us a service," he answered, patiently.

He was too much accustomed to her to notice her unreasonableness.

"How did it happen?" she asked. "What was Reynolds about?"

"I will tell you another time, mother," he replied; and this time with an impatient gesture. "Drive on."

This last was addressed to the coachman, and, waving his hand, the carriage moved off, and Mrs. Carrington resigned herself to her corner, and to mental animadversions on "that Quixotic boy," as she had more than once called her son.

To tell how it happened, we must go back to the earlier part of the evening, when Philip left his home, and followed through the snow the strange woman who had stood before the Potters' parlour-window with a gesture of menace.

The falling snow was bewildering; the movements of the woman were bewildering too. Philip followed her to the bridge, and saw her lean over the parapet and look down into the river. It was a strange night to choose for out-door meditation; on another kind of evening he could have understood it. He passed, and repassed, and would have spoken, but that his spirit was too sore to bear the repulse which certainly awaited him, too sore to bear repulsion from the meanest of his kind.

Then, as if scared by the passers-by, of whom there were still a few, she abruptly quitted the bridge, and hastened along the side of the river. There was very little to be distinguished in that maze of snow-drift even close at hand, and nothing at all at a little distance, and not wishing to appear to watch her too closely, he allowed her to pass out of sight, and awaited her return. That she must return he knew, for the path along the river-bank ceased at a certain point. After waiting for a while, he followed with a quickened pace; but the woman was gone. She must have escaped past him, in the darkness, on the other side of the way: except the river, there was no other outlet.

Then he became absorbed in his own troubles. The blackness closed over his soul; the horrid cruelties of sin assailed his shrinking spirit. He could not utter a cry for pity to the pitiless heaven above him, to the horror of great darkness around him.

He stood still by the river-brink. Not a sound came up from the blackness. There was a light mid-way in the stream, whose faint, dismal reflection only served to show how black it was beneath, above, on every side. Some barge was floating down with the tide. Then another light moved toward where he stood, no doubt the policeman on his beat.

Suddenly there was a splash, and the light on the shore disappeared. Philip ran in the direction of the sound, and gave notice of his coming by a cry.

He was answered from the foot of a flight of steps that led down to the river's brink, and which he had passed in the darkness, the steps of an immemorial ferry, which still plied over the busy stream. A

policeman's lantern guided him, and a policeman's voice called out for his aid. It was here that the woman had disappeared. She was now struggling doggedly but silently with her rescuer.

"Give me a hand with this woman here, will you?" he cried.

Philip descended, and helped to drag her up upon the bank.

"A nice mess you've made of it," said the man, savagely, and shaking the water from his nether garments by stamping violently. "You took care to choose a place where there wasn't enough water to drown a cat, you——" He didn't say what, which was just as well perhaps. "Givin' a fellow a wetting enough to make him ketch his death, fishing you out again, all for nothink." He seemed quite to resent the fact of her safety. "Let me see you," he said, flashing his bull's-eye on the forlorn figure, over which Philip's heart was yearning with his chivalrous Christian tenderness. He had expected to see a younger woman, as also had Philip, whose recognition of Mrs. Wiggett was instantaneous, in spite of her present plight and absence from all that he could associate with her. Her name burst from his lips in astonishment.

"You know her, do you?" said the policeman, turning to Philip.

"What are you doing here?" asked the latter, in his turn.

No answer.

"I believe she has gone out of her mind," he whispered to the policeman. "I know her for an honest man's wife, and will take charge of her, if you like."

"Honest man's wife or no, she must come along to the station with me," replied the policeman.

"No, no!" shrieked the woman, struggling as he took hold of her to lead her away.

The cry went to Philip's heart, as did every cry of distress he ever heard. "I will take her home," he pleaded.

"No, I'm 'sponsible for her now," answered the man, more civilly. "I wouldn't be doing my duty if I let her go. She might try it on again."

Philip felt that this was true, and urged him no further. "I will go and let her husband know," he said.

"Don't tell him!" she cried. "Let him take me, but don't tell Timothy."

Philip was more than ever convinced that Mrs. Wiggett had gone out of her mind, and in that condition had run away from home.

Dark and bitter as the night was, he resolved to take the train to the nearest station, and warn the good gardener of his wife's fate.

The snow had ceased to fall, and the stars were out in the frosty sky, as Philip walked from the station to Hurst, and walked back again, almost immediately, with Mr. Wiggett, silent and sorrowful,

by his side. It was midnight before they reached London, and Philip left his companion, as he seemed to desire, and hastened home. As he crossed the road to enter the court, a carriage drew up just before him. In stopping, the horse slipped on the ice, and fell. It was Philip who helped to raise it. But just as it got on its feet

the horse made a sudden start forward, and one of the shafts of the carriage struck him on the chest and knocked him down, and, before it could be backed sufficiently, the still startled animal had planted a foot on the prostrate form, and Philip became insensible.

(To be continued).

A MORNING PRAYER.

THIS morning, Lord, I pray to thee,
From evil thoughts to set me free;
And may thy Spirit rest within
This heart of mine, too prone to sin.

From thoughtless words which thee offend,
My lips, O God, to-day defend;
Be thou my frequent theme, and may
Thy Spirit guide me what to say.

This body that thou gavest me,
To be a glory unto thee,
Oh, keep from every act that would
Disgrace the shedding of thy blood.

Accept, O Lord, my humble prayer,
And make my daily walk thy care;
That so each action, word, and thought,
May prove the change that thou hast wrought.

A. B. T.

PRESENTIMENTS.

BY THE REV. J. B. OWEN, M.A.,

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SCRIPTURE brackets the two—"wars and rumours of war"—as being both elements of "distress of nations, with perplexity." Which is the worse, the war, or the rumour? The actual bloodshed of the conflict is terrible enough, but the rumour generates forebodings, the exquisite anguish of which often exceeds any reality. The bracket appeals to that peculiarity of ordinary minds, which is apt to magnify the future and the unknown, beyond most instances of positive occurrence. The agony of fear often transcends the agony of fact. At his wife's tidings of David's wrath, Nabal's "heart died within him, and he became as a stone." The rumour slew him, without the war. No man can torment another man so fearfully as a man can torment himself. Conscience is its own avenger; and if its effects be so terrible in this life, where there is hope, how infinitely more so must they be in that place where hope never comes? The very miseries of presentiment are, in this view, so many sharp mercies to deter from the repetition of sin, by turning back the delinquent to flee from the wrath to come. There, at all events, no foreboding will equal the tremendous reality; no moral power of self-torture can anticipate, much less exhaust beforehand, the infinite penalties of final judgment on the impenitent and unbelieving. If "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived" the glories of heaven, it is equally true of the torments of hell. But the dread of that awful future may be overruled, so as to influence the subject of it to make a timely escape into the arms of His mercy, who "willeth not that any should perish,

but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth, and be saved."

This I take to be the office of presentiment among man's moral agencies—viz., to discourage sin, and to intercept calamity, by the alarm which induces a prompt adoption of accessible means of escape. Like physical pain, which draws attention to the particular part of the body needing medical assistance, constituting disease the guardian of the general health, the miserable forebodings of the sinner open his eyes to the guilt and peril of his sin, and, by the grace of God, drive him to the Saviour. "They that are whole" (or think themselves so) "need not a physician; but they that are sick." It is apt to make us careless of the bodily health when we imagine there is nothing the matter with us: it is equally true of the soul. Ignorant of the peril involved in its sin, and loath to be told of it, it "goeth on still in its wickedness," without an inner protest or apprehension of consequences, and is sometimes so dull, dumb, and dead to its responsibilities that, like the rich man in hell, it never "lifts up its eyes" till it is already there. Better every way to be put on our guard, however sharp or bitter the instrument that warns us.

Rumours of wars lead to preparation for wars—prevent a nation from being assailed unarmed—set them to examine the state of their defences—to remedy their defects, strengthen their weak points, increase their ammunition and armaments, and prepare for battle. Preparedness for war is the best guarantee for the preservation of peace. It is better to be alarmed, than to be surprised, to be put on our guard, than be captured off our post.

Just so the inner misgivings of an unquiet, dissatisfied spirit are disguised messengers from the goodness of God, leading us to self-inquiry, confession of sins, repentance, and to what St. Paul describes, among the parts of Christian armour, as having the "feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." One man, say, commits an offence against morality. "Lust when it hath conceived bringeth forth sin." The temporal consequences of his trespass, in the event of detection, make him uneasy. In this case, it is not the sin, but its results to the sinner, which molest his thoughts. He dwells upon the penalty so long, so painfully, and constantly, that his anguish becomes equivalent to its secret infliction; his conscience, in the terms of a canonical suit, "promotes the office of the judge." He could scarcely be more miserable were he enduring the actual punishment. By these pains and terrors of presentiment he does not atone for the past transgression, but they may deter him from future ones. In the next temptation their recollection stands by him, and helps him to resist himself. And thus, misgiving ranks among "the terrors of the Lord which persuade men." The self-avenging torments which tracked the footsteps of the former sin take post in the memory, like the swords of the cherubim which flashed every way to stop the returning culprit on the threshold of his crime. Thus, virtually, the secret misery becomes a confidential mercy, and vindicates the grace and wisdom of the arrangement, by which the sin so disturbs the mind of the sinner that "the wicked are as a troubled sea, that cannot rest," and, eventually, their very despair thrusts them upon the only hope set before them, and the only one that maketh not ashamed.

Another man, equally guilty of hidden violations of the law of God, becomes "a law unto himself" by laying hands on his own life. Abercrombie's image represents the tormented man as "rushing into the arms of death to avoid the horror of his countenance." As the drunkard would drown wretched thoughts in drink, the suicide would bury them in death—a dram the miserable comforter in either case, and both deceptive, both luring on their victim to deeper damnation. The mistake in the drunkard, or the suicide, seeking relief from the terrors of sin in more sin, arises from not "hearing the rod, and *who* hath appointed it." They confound chastisement with judgment, a movement of parental correction for a sign of impending destruction; and the devil tempts them to turn the constructive elements of hope into unbelieving grounds of despair. Men drink many a bitter cup which their own vice had filled; but in every case an ultimate mercy lies in the lesson, that "the way of transgressors is hard," "be sure your sin will find you out;" but

"let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him." But, as Daniel put it, "Men will have no mercy on their own souls."

On the other hand, while presentiment, whether founded on rumour, or originating in the individual mind, is not to be despised, it is not to be dwelt on too strongly, or too persistently, especially when we can trace it up to no one particular act of moral guilt. There are timid, misgiving Christians who "write bitter things against themselves," which, like a false prophecy, "God hath not spoken." On the contrary, the loving, tender Lord disclaims them, and expostulates with the spiritual hypochondriac, "Why will ye die, O house of Israel? Is my arm shortened that it cannot save? mine ear heavy that it cannot hear?" Is it not specially "appointed for them that mourn in Zion to receive beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness?" Instead of the harp hanging on the willow, as if asleep for very sorrow, be yours the cry of David, "Awake, lute and harp: I myself will awake right early." "There is a time to weep, and a time to rejoice," and if you will receive it, you may "rejoice in the Lord alway." Weeping is the occasional shower which drops from a penitent eye on the ground of the heart; but joy in the Lord is the blessed sunshine which fertilises the rain from heaven into fruitful seasons. Your conviction of sin is the work of the Holy Spirit; but he never intended you should stop short there: he is the Comforter, as well as the Convincer. But your overmuch sorrow has the effect of another kind of sin, which "blinds the eyes of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Such obstinate, hopeless sorrow, which, like Rachel, refuses to be comforted in the sorrow of bereavement, is the sorrow of the world, the sorrow of the lost; not the godly sorrow that worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of. Think of this, and be ashamed of this subtle self-deception, by which you allowed the deep shadow of your sin, like the penal darkness of Calvary, to hide from your belief the sight of your Saviour. Jerusalem did so, and she saw him no more. The things which belonged to her peace were for ever hidden from her eyes. I have known men of a morbid turn of mind who, without any ailment but such as is common to man, never admitted they were well, whose dread of ill-health entailed upon them all the misery of disease; and I have known other men, whose hypochondria assuming a moral phase, endured for years much of the wretchedness of perdition, from simply giving themselves up for lost. In such instances, the action of presenti-

ment was turned aside from its proper function, and made a ministration of death, instead of what it was sent for—a ministration of life and peace. The voice of conscience may be wilfully misinterpreted in one direction, as well as be abused, silenced, or seared in another. When the conscience cannot be appeased, appeal to the affections: "If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." When Peter listened only to conscience, he could only go out and weep bitterly; but when he laid bare his heart, with all its failings and infirmities, he could plead with his Master while the echo of his denial still rung in his ears: "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." Peter knew that, too. Do you? Do you know that you love Christ? Can you truly avow to the searcher of hearts, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee?" If so, why doubt his divine reciprocity? If you really love him, that is the sign and the seal that he loves you—that you are saved, for "we love him because he first loved us." His mighty, merciful heart forestalled yours. He loved you from the beginning, loved you all along, and your hard, insensible heart has been blind as the stone which Jacob slept on at Luz; "the Lord was in the place, and you knew it not." Awake, arise, and make an altar of that reproof, but now sanctified heart, whereon to offer the living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service. "The sacrifice of God is a broken spirit:" yours is broken; but you have not offered it to him, you have kept back part of it; like Ananias, though not with his motive, you have not believed he would accept what he graciously asks for—"My son, give me thine heart!" Why should you refuse just the very kind of heart he most welcomes? You poor, timid, sensitive, but rather obstinate, and very foolish, disciple of little faith, how, or why, have you overlooked the truth, that "a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise?"

To apply this image spiritually: Wars, and rumours of war are alike ended by the treaty of peace with God, through Jesus Christ. "We are ambassadors for God," and ambassadors are not sent to proclaim war, but to "follow after things which make for peace." Our commission is to "speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished."

On the other hand, there are perturbed states of mind, to each subject of which we must cry, with Jehu, "What hast thou to do with peace?"

Better be uneasy than act unconscientiously. For example, in the discharge of the responsibility of your political franchise, "let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind," and not be led blindfold by the party persuasions of others. God and your country expect you to be true to your convictions, without fear or favour. Ask God, as the apostles

did in their election of Matthias, whom *he* has chosen, and follow what appears to be his will, whether or no it be "the will of the flesh or the will of man." If Christianity more influenced the suffrage, there would be more Christians in the senate. Let neither wars nor rumours of wars, neither the heat of conflict, nor the dread of consequences, prejudice your decision; then, neither side can fairly blame you. Let presentiment induce consideration, but no desertion of the path which your own consciences prompt you to pursue.

Again, this monitory use of misgiving has other applications. There is that dejected clerk, till lately the buoyant spirit of the counting-house—with a conscience light as his merry heart, and a character pure and clear as the unwritten paper in his office. Why is his soul cast down and so disquieted within him? He has yielded to the temptations of vice, and supplied the means of its criminal indulgence by embezzling the moneys of his employer. His conscience daily charges him with breach of trust. He cannot look his master in the face lest he should detect the felon in his eye. His nights have forfeited their slumber, his days their light, his food its relish, and his thoughts their peace. Conscience anticipating, perhaps intercepting, the arrest of law, has seized him in the act, and he dare not plead "not guilty" on her arraignment, but suffers at once the shame, remorse, degradation, ruin, and anguish in which all who love him, and believe in him, will miserably share. Ah, do not risk the issue on some vague, delusive hope of concealment and impunity. Do not attempt to cover the sin by committing another, which can only defer and aggravate the day of reckoning. Still less, be terrified into continuing to pilfer by the threat of some accomplice to betray what is already done; that cannot be undone, but the wrong may be hopelessly enhanced. Confess to some one before even that poor amends be too late, through your detection. If your heart fail you in openly acknowledging your guilt, to your master direct, choose some wise and pious intercessor in whom to confide the painful task of revealing your baseness, certifying your remorse, and, it may be, arranging terms for the reparation of your offence, procuring your forgiveness, and, in any event, terminating the opportunity and temptation to repeat your defalcations. Whatever the immediate issue, your duty is confession; the first loss will be the least to all parties, and your punishment will not be, like Cain's, "too heavy for you to bear." God will sustain the penitent ill-doer with the gracious amnesty, "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee."

I could name more than a few instances where a delinquency of youth, admitted, mourned over, and suffered for, has been nobly atoned, and for-



(Drawn by S. L. FILDEN.)

"It was from Sir Samuel Delamere."—p. 235.

gotten, in the respect and confidence achieved by the Christian integrities of the after manhood. St. Paul had such instances in view when he wrote so tenderly, "Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is meet, that he may have to give to him that needeth." "It is more blessed to give than to receive;" how much more to give than to steal—to be a benefactor than a malefactor! Obey, then, the voice of these sad and secret dejections; their forebodings are like the instinct of those Indian lizards, which flit across the face of a sleeping man, disturb his peace, and will not let him rest till he has risen, and searched, and found, and expelled the deadly reptile, which, being undiscovered, might have stung him to the sleep of death. Who would be insensible to the good Providence which sent his wisdom and mercy to our rescue, though in the otherwise unwelcome intrusion of a lizard? Then never turn a deaf ear or stubborn heart to the whispers of these misgivings, when they force reflection on personal conduct, and, in David's words, make the transgressor feel "my sin is ever before me." They combine, in the inner conflict, both the "wars and rumours of wars," and make them subservient to the altered course, which, through mercy, issues in repentance, pardon, and peace. Thou back-slidden man, who hast fallen back to the world; and thou, worldly man, who hast never left it, neither of you are satisfied with things as they are. In one case, you are not what you were; in neither case are you what you feel you should be. Both your minds at intervals misgive you, and misgivings in your mental conditions are not like

the groundless apprehensions of nervous derangement, without a probable fulfilment. Remain as you are, and they will inevitably be fulfilled. That "sentence of death within yourselves," of which an accusing conscience from time to time rings the knell, unless respite by your timely repentance, and trust in the grace of the Saviour will, and must, in the end "deliver you to the tormentors." Then, let the "wars and rumours of wars" sound their commissioned alarm. Their "trumpet gives no uncertain sound," their wailing, melancholy note means, "Prepare ye for the battle," "put on the whole armour of God—sword of the Spirit, shield of faith, helmet of hope, and breastplate of righteousness," and then "stand fast in the liberty with which Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again in any yoke of bondage." Thus, the war which rendered you at variance with yourself, like all righteous war, will become the painful minister of peace, and give you the victory over that "other law in your members warring against the law in your mind."

But, remain as you are, worsted already on your own admission, and you enter the field beaten beforehand, a prey to "your adversary the devil, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour." Oh, better, infinitely better, to yield at once to Him who "came to seek and to save them that were lost." If that be the gracious issue, then welcome be "the weary and heavy-laden spirit" that could not choose but accept its rest in Christ, and blessed be the mingled mercy and judgment which drove me to enlist under the banner of the Captain of our salvation, though it were by "wars and rumours of wars."

PRAYERS FROM THE DEEP.

I.

THY storms are over us and under us,
Our masts mourn loudly for their shredded
sails;
The white-capped waves are very thunderous,
Because of the dread anger of thy gales
Lord God!
Is it the Power of Darkness that prevails,
Or are these winds the lashes of thy rod?

II.

Sweet Saviour of the sinking, thou hast trod
The rages of the mount-encircled pool;
Reach forth thine arm to help us, Son of God,
Most high, most meek, most sweet, most merciful
Lord Christ!
Breathe our deliverance—Whose word, Whose nod,
To break the seethes of Galilee, sufficed.

III.

What angel spake? * Those shivering, steely darts
Make heaven livid. How can we endure

* John xii. 29

This wrath? Descend on our unhealed hearts,
Most fair and holy and most dear and pure
Lord Spirit!

Thy balms of healing are at hand, and sure;
Thy face is gentle: we are blind that fear it.

IV.

And is thy word gone forth so suddenly,
And are the storms of winds so quick withdrawn?
See! how the soft rain smoothes the sobbing sea!
And the torn clouds are fringed and pricked with
dawn.

Lord God! Lord Christ! Lord Holy Ghost!
Thine hand is firm, but gentle; for thou know'st,
Our fearful souls, our frail and wearied frames,
Wherefore we laud and magnify thy Names,
Most Highest Trinity, whom all the host
Of heaven and earth adore and make glad boast,
Lord God, Lord Christ, Lord Holy Ghost.
Yea, unto thee these praises shall ascend
World without end.

B.

TOO FAST.

BY WILLIAM DUTHIE, AUTHOR OF "A TRAMP'S WALLET," ETC.



GEORGE HERRISON was sitting in his small chamber, beating the bare carpet with his heels. The carpet was *very* bare, and the furniture of the room altogether poor and mean.

The room itself was up three pairs of stairs, and narrowly escaped the appellation of "an attic." It looked all the poorer and meaner, because its occupant was well dressed, and rather a dashing-looking personage. The fact was that George Harrison was attired in his best suit, but the diminutive chamber he occupied was in the unfortunate predicament of being without a "change."

George Harrison was poor, and was compelled to choose his lodgings accordingly; but he took care to appear in his own person as one of easy circumstances.

It was evident, as he sat in the rickety chair, dealing spiteful blows with his heels on the miserable shred of carpet, that he was in an especially bad humour. You might tell that, apart from his more violent action, by his puckered lips, the nervous twitching of the muscles about his mouth, and the passionate flashing of his dark eyes. Presently, a gentle tap at the door arrested the vigorous motion of his feet. "Come in!" George shouted, rather than said, without moving from his seat.

The door opened, and a quiet, complaisant-looking young man entered the room. With outstretched hand, and a pleasant smile upon his face, he advanced towards its occupant.

"Is that you, Ben?" was the only reply George Harrison deigned to make to the proffered salutation of his visitor. "I had given you up."

"My dear boy," was the amiable answer, "don't be cross."

"Enough to make a fellow cross," was the surly rejoinder; "why, I expected you an hour ago."

Ben—or, to give him his full title, Benjamin Newbon—preserved a discreet silence under this attack, and, seating himself in the only other chair in the room, placed a hand on each knee, and looked pleasantly in the face of his friend.

"You take things so very coolly," George blurted out again; "one would think nothing had happened."

"Well, what has happened?" was Ben's placid query.

"How do I know?" the other retorted, in the same querulous tone. "You tell me nothing. After keeping me an hour beyond your time, you sit yourself down as quietly as if all my anxiety were of no consequence."

"My dear fellow," Ben replied, "you are in such a hurry. I am tired, to begin with. And you will remember, if I am an hour later than you think I ought to be, that I have been running about for that hour in your service."

Harrison had risen from his chair, and now, with hands in his pockets, stood facing his amiable friend. He seemed about to give vent to some angry rejoinder, but checked himself, and merely made the blunt inquiry—"Well, what's the news, after all?"

Very good news. The important mission upon which his friend Newbon had been dispatched had been fully carried out, and with reasonable success. It was a mission of some delicacy. It involved a visit to the father of a young lady to whom George Harrison was paying fervent addresses; and it concerned the pecuniary resources and future prospects of that young gentleman himself, viewed with regard to his formal acceptance as a suitor.

"Old Redfern was out when I called," said Ben, in the course of a long, circumstantial, and rather prosy narrative. "That delayed me; but, after all, it was the best thing that could have happened."

And so it appeared, from the good use the kindly intercessor had made of the time with the mother and daughter.

"Ah!" George burst in, now completely softened, "it will be all right when I get that appointment."

"Precisely what I told them," said Ben. "And to do them justice, there is every disposition to regard the matter in a favourable light. There are no personal objections to you, George; but, of course, prudent people must look to the future."

Harrison held out his hand now to grasp that of his friend. "You're a capital fellow, Ben!" he exclaimed, "and will excuse my little ill-temper, I'm sure. You know I don't mean anything by it; but I was so anxious."

"All right, George; don't say another word about it."

"I don't know how you manage to be so cool over things," continued Harrison; "when I'm all on fire you are quite steady and unconcerned."

"It is our natures, I suppose. I am too slow, and you are a trifle too fast."

"But I always come right in the end," said George, in self-defence. "And it is better to be ahead of the world than to be creeping after it."

"Perhaps it is," was the quiet, meditative reply of his friend.

"But I must say," continued Herrison, "I sometimes envy your coolness, and what I call apathy. It must be so comfortable never to be put out of temper."

"Especially without a cause," remarked Newbon, slyly. "But now," he added, "about this appointment of yours. Your success with the Redferns depends upon that. How is it going on?"

"Oh, swimmingly," cried Herrison. "I expect it will be all finished in a week."

"Indeed! You will be lucky."

"And why not, Ben, I should like to know? You know I am perfectly eligible."

"I never said you were not, my dear boy; quite the reverse."

"Then, I have had one interview with Sir Samuel—what's his name?—Delamere, and I think we shall get on capitally together."

"What are you waiting for, then?"

"Why, what a fellow you are, Ben," exclaimed George, a little irritably. "Don't you remember I have had credentials to collect? And here they are: nothing could be more satisfactory."

He drew from his pocket as he spoke an official-looking packet, and tossed it on to the table before his friend.

"I was just going to post it," said he; "it will look better than sending it by hand."

"I recollect now, George. Of course; I don't know how I came to forget. Somehow I had it in my head that all that was done; but, of course, it was not. Send it by post by all means."

"I glory in the anticipation of my success," cried Herrison, seating himself on the little shaky deal table, which trembled and creaked at his every movement.

"Nothing, you see, could be better suited for me than this appointment. It was made on purpose, I do believe."

"You will be a lucky fellow—if you get it; that's what I say."

"If I get it!" was the scornful answer of Herrison. He seemed inclined, for a moment, to give way to ill-temper, but his enthusiasm overcame his anger. "Why, I look upon the thing as done. It is as straight as a rule, and must come right."

"It will suit your taste so entirely."

"The very thing. I shall be at once librarian, amanuensis, and independent author. I shall have the means within reach of my hand of gratifying my highest ambition. The salary is, of course, not very high; but, look at the position. Look at the opportunities it will afford me of winning my way in the world."

"Capital!" murmured Ben. "Then, as for the salary—how much did you say?"

"One hundred and fifty pounds a-year to begin

with," answered Herrison, in a tone of depreciation; "but then it will be certain."

"Capital!" repeated Ben. "I only hope it will come out all right."

Herrison either did not hear or took no heed of this remark; his vivid fancy flew above all such commonplace considerations.

"If the position had been made purposely for me," he went on, "it could not be more entirely to my taste. It will gratify my love for books; I shall be able to give free scope to my literary aspirations—and I flatter myself I have some ability that way; and I shall take my stand at once as a highly respectable member of society. My deserts will be recognised at last, and I shall hear no more that amiable commiseration of my kind friends, which is gall and wormwood to a proud man. Why, Ben, I shall be, in fact, private secretary to Sir Samuel Delamere."

"Of course you will. Capital!" concurred Newbon, with a slight touch of the enthusiasm of his friend. "Only, George," he added, "remember one thing: don't be too sanguine. It might, you know—there's always a chance that it *might*—go wrong. You must always be prepared for that."

"All right, my friend," replied Herrison, with a proud, triumphant laugh. "I am prepared for that, or anything else. But, take my word for it, in a week I shall be private secretary to Sir Samuel Delamere."

The two friends left the house together, but parted on their different courses at the door.

George Herrison was, no doubt, right in the main in his estimate of the probabilities of his success in his new enterprise. In every respect it promised well; and it must be acknowledged, in justice to him, that he was worthy of the position he sought. He was endowed by nature with capabilities of a high order, and, thanks to the provident care of a relative, his talents had been developed by education. The bent of his mind was decidedly towards literature; and he had already given more than one undoubted proof of his qualities of an author. Thus he was, by ability and natural taste, an eligible candidate for the appointment of secretary. But, on the other hand, he was very young—was rash and impatient. Of an enthusiastic temperament, the thought of the moment sought at once to show itself in action. If it failed to do that, it was soon cast aside and forgotten. He had no conception of the slow, laborious working out of a great scheme, the fruit of which was to be reaped in the future. That which was to be done must be done at once, or never. Thus delay was to him actual torture, and failure, sore and heavy discouragement.

The letters of recommendation and other credentials, which were to carry George Herrison into harbour as on the crest of a wave, were duly

dispatched, and the young man waited with such patience as he could command for the result. Not that he had any doubt of what the end must be. It was only a question of a few days—of a week, at the utmost—and he should find himself installed in the library of his future patron. Meanwhile, the anticipations of the delights of the time which was at hand fully occupied his thoughts and sustained his spirits. Under the circumstances, he did not debar himself from paying an occasional visit to the Redferns, where he was received with a cordiality greater than he had dared to hope for.

A week passed by—the week which was to terminate all his suspense, and to start George Herrison on the straight high road to fame and fortune. But it brought him no news—positively nothing. George winced under this silence; but he put on an appearance of cheerfulness, and was even boisterous in his hilarity. So much the worse for his inward peace of mind.

Another week hurried on to its end, and still there came no answer. It was harassing—it was perplexing. What could be the cause of the delay? Was it possible that the missive had miscarried? No; it was not probable—barely possible. Sir Samuel was very neglectful, that was certain. In the meantime there was nothing to be done but to wait.

Waiting is weary work to all men, and George Herrison was the last one to bear up against it with patience. He rebelled loudly and vehemently. What did Sir Samuel mean by playing with him in this way? It was arrogance—it was insolence! Another week, and another, and another. The same cold, dead suspense, without a gleam of light in the horizon.

Six weeks had passed away since the testimonials had been sent in, when Herrison again met his friend Newbon. George was morose, taciturn, savage. He had no words bitter enough for Sir Samuel Delamere. His patron, indeed! Let him beware how he scorned and contemned a man who was infinitely his superior. Was not this neglect cruel? Was it not ungentlemanly—dishonourable? A little more, and he, George Herrison, would tell this man so to his face.

Nothing could be more soothing, more gentle, and considerate than the manner of Newbon. He not merely preached patience, he epitomised it in his own person. He had a hundred reasons to give which would account for the delay, and cited numerous instances of occurrences of a similar kind which had terminated happily. His success in tranquillising the mind of his irritable friend was only partial, and he left him but little comforted.

Another, and another week, and still the same blank silence. Herrison was growing desperate.

Every day added to his perplexity and his trouble. The Redferns had become sceptical and distant. He was no longer welcomed as he had been. He could see—he could feel the difference. What if he should fail, after all? The idea was intolerable. For a moment he thought of making a call upon Sir Samuel, in order to satisfy himself of the real position of affairs; but his pride rose at the thought, and he rejected it with scorn.

Time sped on its silent, rapid course. Again a week, and again. At the end of that time Newbon received a note from Herrison, stating that he had started on a visit of a few days to a relative in the country. Would "Dear Ben," in the meantime, take charge of his letters, if any? Little need of such a precaution. No letters came.

Herrison returned from his visit sick and disheartened. All the consolations of Newbon were of no avail: his friend refused to be comforted.

After the lapse of several days, Newbon, feeling somewhat uneasy with regard to him, called at George's lodging. He was not at home—had not been home for, at least, two days and nights. He had left no message or instructions with his landlady; but there was a note left on the table, addressed "Mr. Newbon. When he calls."

With a strange thrill of fear, Newbon took the letter, and slowly opened it; he was almost afraid to read its contents. When he did so, he found they ran thus:—

DEAR BEN,—I can stand this no longer. I am ashamed to visit the Redferns. My hopes are blighted; and I fly from this hateful place. You will perhaps hear of me some of these days from the banks of the Ganges. I leave my correspondence to you. God bless you! Yours ever, GEORGE.

Newbon drew a heavy sigh as he read this epistle; but it was in some measure a sigh of relief. Sorrowful as it was, he had dreaded even worse intelligence.

"Poor George!" was his mental soliloquy; "he was too sanguine, and could not bear a rebuff."

As he turned to leave the house, a thundering postman's knock startled him from his reverie. The landlady ran to the door, and returned with a letter—an official-looking, bulky letter, sealed with a great seal, and addressed to "G. Herrison, Esq." Even Newbon's apathetic nature was roused into activity by this unexpected missive. Taking the letter from the landlady's reluctant hand, he tore off the envelope, and from a bundle of testimonials drew forth the epistle itself. It was from Sir Samuel Delamere, and to this effect:—

The writer expressed his sincere regrets for the delay which had occurred in the transmission of his reply to Mr. Herrison—a delay due partly to his own indisposition, but mainly to a death in the family—and, being perfectly satisfied with Mr. Herrison's credentials, which he begged herewith to return, should be happy to see him on the

earliest opportunity, to arrange with him his routine of duties as secretary.

"Poor fellow!" was the exclamation which burst from Newbon's lips; "if he had only had a little more patience."

But what to do?—where to seek Herrison?—how to make him acquainted with his good fortune? Alas! how indeed? He was not to be found. A clue to the step he had taken came the next day. Enclosed in an envelope was a

scrap torn from a newspaper, across which was written in large letters, and in pencil, the word "India."

So it was. George Herrison never became private secretary to Sir Samuel Delamere, nor did he marry Miss Redfern. On the other hand, although he did enlist as private in a cavalry regiment in the Indian service, he gained rapid promotion, and now stands well for a commission.

A DROP OF POISON, AND WHAT IT WROUGHT.

HIGH HO! how dull it is. I hate mending, especially when I have no one to talk to. I wish I had a nice book to read. Oh, dear, I wish——"

"A letter, Miss Sophy," said the servant, entering the room rather unceremoniously, and disturbing Sophy's reverie.

"A letter, Hester," and Sophy's tone became more animated, as she held out her hand to receive the welcome disturber of her dismal thoughts.

Sophy opened and read the letter, and as she did so her face wore first a pleased, and then a doubtful and rather troubled expression.

"How tiresome!" she burst forth. "I declare it's a great shame. I should so like to go, and there could be no harm. I suppose I must write and decline it. Well, at any rate I'll finish my work first."

Sophy Gresham's father was an invalid, and had been ordered by his medical attendant to spend the winter in the south of England. At first he had refused to go, being unwilling to break up his family; but as the cold weather advanced he grew so alarmingly ill that, at the urgent entreaty of his friends, he at last consented. Thither his wife accompanied him, leaving Sophy to take charge of the house and her little brother.

It had been Sophy's great desire ever since she began to "grow up" to go to the theatre, or to hear one of the operas she had heard her great friend Louisa Wilmot describe in such glowing terms; but when she had spoken to her parents on the subject, they had given her their unequivocal refusal, telling her how great was the evil consequent upon an indulgence in such tastes.

The letter which Sophy had just received, and which gave rise to the remarks quoted, contained an invitation, a ticket, and a programme, the ticket and the programme for an opera to take place that night, and the invitation for her to accompany Mr., Mrs., and Miss Wilmot there.

The letter went on to say that they would call for Sophy on their way, unless they received an intimation to the contrary.

Sophy took up her mending in order to give her-

self time to think it over. She was very undecided. Two sides of the question would present themselves to her mind: the one, what a pity to throw away such a good opportunity; the other, what would her father and mother say? "Surely," she thought, "they would not refuse me this once, and under such favourable circumstances, too. If there had only been time to write to them—but there was not."

As Sophy was thus meditating, she glanced at the programme lying by her side, and which had dropped from the letter without her noticing it. This decided her, for it was a very attractive one, being an opera of which she was particularly fond, and the principal airs of which she possessed. The temptation was very great, and Sophy could not withstand it. Ringing the bell she ordered the tea, but being much too excited to eat anything, she employed her time in taking several stains out of the dress which she had decided to wear.

By the time she had succeeded in making her dress presentable, she found, on consulting her watch, that she had barely time left her to be ready by the time appointed, so leaving the preparation she had been using on the mantelpiece, and giving the servant strict injunctions not to let Charlie get at it, nor, indeed, to let him out of her sight, she quitted the room in order to dress. She had just put the finishing touches to her toilet when the carriage arrived, and as she passed out at the door she once more reminded the servant of her charge.

No sooner did she know that she had gone too far to be able to recall her decision, than she began to repent it; she felt frightened at what she was doing, and would have given a great deal to have been safe at home again; and it was with a very melancholy smile that she returned her friends' animated greetings. But before long the merry conversation and high spirits of her friend restored her to her usual cheerfulness, and by the time they had arrived at the Opera House no traces of her repentant mood remained. The lights and the gaily-dressed people made Sophy feel perfectly bewildered, and when the tuning of the instruments commenced her excitement was intense. She sat with flushed face and drawn

breath watching the crowd below, and, as Mrs. Wilmot laughingly told her, looked ready to jump over the box.

At last the opera commenced. Sophy was enchanted. Passionately fond of music, the splendid singing of the well-known airs, added to the excitement of so new a scene, was unspeakably delightful, and she could scarcely believe it possible when the curtain dropped on the last act, and the people streaming towards the doors showed her that she too must join the homeward-bound throng. During the drive home she could think of nothing else than the exquisite music and thrilling acting she had but just now been witnessing; and as she bade her friends good night, and thanked them for the enjoyable evening she had spent, it was without the slightest remembrance of the compunction she had felt only a few hours ago.

Could Sophy but have known how mournfully, ay, fatally, her escapade was to terminate—could she but have seen the sorrow that was even now preparing for her, where had been her light-hearted gaiety?

Sophy's twice-repeated injunction fell on idle and heedless ears, for no sooner had the door closed on her back, than Hester determined to carry into execution her desire to have a "chat with the girl next door," so giving a little peep in at the parlour, and seeing Charlie fast asleep on the rug before the fire, she softly closed the door behind her and went out into the garden, giving her conscience a quietus by the reflection, that she was doing no worse than her mistress, and that if Miss Sophy might disobey her parents, there could not be much harm in her disobeying in such a trifle—a course of reasoning too frequently adopted where it tallies with the interests of the person concerned. She had said to herself, "Only a minute or two," but the two minutes had grown into an hour when Hester again entered the house, and it was not without a slight misgiving that she approached the parlour to look after "Master Charlie."

The little fellow had waked from his sleep some time ago, and having nothing to amuse him, he commenced a search for something to play with. The cat was the first object that presented itself to him as being at all eligible for his purpose, and accordingly for some little time he busied himself in mauling her about; but pussy did not feel quite so contented about it as he did, and evinced her non-satisfaction of the treatment she was being subjected to by giving poor Charlie an ugly scratch.

Since pussy would not play with him, he must find something else to take her place, and was feeling very undecided whether or not to cry, when his eyes fell on the bottle which Sophy had been using, and which she had left on the mantelpiece.

It was a liquid of a bright crimson colour, and attracted by the prettiness of it, he clambered on a chair and succeeded in obtaining the wished-for prize.

When Hester entered the room the bottle was raised to his lips, and she, darting forward, snatched it from the child's hand, and administering to him no very gentle shake, asked him if he had swallowed any.

Afraid that if he said "Yes" he might be visited with more of Hester's displeasure, he quickly answered, "No;" and Hester, without further inquiry, took him up to bed.

When Sophy arrived at home she was so tired that, contrary to her custom, she neglected to go into little Charlie's room and see that he was sleeping comfortably, before retiring for the night.

Wholly unconscious of any impending evil, she fell asleep, and slept soundly till late the next morning.

As she was lying half asleep, Hester entered the room, exclaiming, "Oh, Miss Sophy! do come to Master Charlie; I can't tell whatever is the matter with him."

Hastily putting on her dressing-gown, Sophy followed Hester into Charlie's room. The poor little fellow lay perfectly quiet, save for a moan that escaped him at intervals; his lips and face were perfectly colourless, and now and then he would writhe and toss as if in the greatest agony, though these fits lasted but a few seconds, and were followed by a prostration that was like death itself.

Dispatching Hester for the doctor, Sophy endeavoured to allay the little sufferer's pain, and thus the time dragged itself wearily away till the doctor came. After he had gone through the usual preliminaries, and had administered a composing draught, he took Sophy aside to tell her his opinion of the case.

Poisoned! A cold shudder passed over Sophy as she heard the word, confirming the fears she had been endeavouring to suppress. Yes, the child was poisoned, and the doctor held out but very little hope. Mrs. Gresham must be sent for immediately, he said. A crisis might take place within twelve hours, and there was no telling if it would be a favourable one.

The first thing to be done was to send for Mrs. Gresham: a letter might not reach her in time, so it was decided that Hester should again be the messenger.

How Sophy dreaded meeting her mother, whom she had so injured; but it was unavoidable, so the sooner it was over the better it would be for all parties.

Late in the afternoon Mrs. Gresham reached home, and Sophy gave up her post of nurse.

Hester had related to Mrs. Gresham the whole history of Sophy's visit to the opera, and Sophy was not a little relieved to find that she would be spared the painful task of doing so herself.

For a whole week did Mrs. Gresham watch by her child's bedside, not knowing but that each hour might prove the last in which she would be so engaged—a week of suspense that to Sophy was almost unendurable, and then poor little Charlie

began to recover. How thankful Sophy felt! What a weight had been lifted from her mind none but herself could guess, and as her little brother slowly grew stronger and better her gladness knew no bounds.

But Sophy's joy was destined to be short lived, for fresh trouble was coming upon her, and from a quarter whence she least expected it.

Little Charlie had so far advanced towards convalescence that he was able to lie on the sofa, when an urgent message came to Mrs. Gresham to return at once to her husband, who was so ill as not to be expected to live many hours.

Sophy would have been glad to accompany her mother to her father's bedside, for she could hardly bear the suspense she must endure in remaining; but somebody must stay with Charlie, and Sophy could only feel thankful that after what had taken place her mother should trust her so far.

The days passed on, and each one brought less hope with it. The attack had come on some days before Mrs. Gresham was made aware of it, and the people with whom he had been left had not thought anything of it till it had assumed a serious form. Had Mrs. Gresham been there when the first symptoms had shown themselves, she would have called in a doctor, and he might have been saved; but now the disease had advanced so rapidly that nothing short of a miracle could stay it: such was the doctor's opinion.

He recognised no one, not even his wife; for days he lay without a single interval of consciousness, till one day he appeared so much better that Mrs. Gresham began to hope again. He seemed to have recovered his appetite wonderfully, and spoke so cheerfully that even the doctor was surprised, said he should like to sit up for a little while, and was so much better that his wife ventured to leave him in order to take a little rest.

"He would go to sleep, he felt tired," he said, and when Mrs. Gresham left him he was sleeping quietly, for the first time during his illness. It was quite dark when she again returned to his room, and he was still sleeping, just as she had left him.

She would not light a candle for fear of disturbing him, so sat down by the bedside waiting for him to wake.

The evening passed away, and still she watched on, the firelight throwing a strangely mournful light over the room, now leaping into light and making everything plainly visible, and again as suddenly dying away, leaving what a moment gone by was bright and cheerful, now dark, desolate, and gloomy.

A strange foreboding had come over the watcher. Why did he not awake? She bent over the still, quiet figure, and as she did so the fire flame leapt up brightly, showing her his face cold and white, and then died away.

She touched his hand with hers, laid her face on

his: how cold it was! She spoke to him, but he did not answer her; begged him to speak one word, but no word came in return; and then the truth dawned on her, that she was a widow and her children fatherless.

But she could not think of him as dead; he had passed away so peacefully that she could not realise it; the smile was still on his face that had been there when he had told her to go and rest, and she could but repeat the words, "Not dead, but sleepeth."

She could not weep, she could scarce feel sorrow; he had died so calmly that she could only feel thankful. Through the night she sat there, with her face pressed against the one which she had loved so well, and which would remain to her but so very, very short a time.

The people of the house stared to see her so quiet and emotionless; they whispered together about her, but she heeded them not; they could not know of the peace that was within her.

For he had lived a life of faith, an upright and God-fearing one, and had endeavoured to bring up his children to follow in his steps. She knew he had been at peace with his God, or that beautiful and holy smile had never rested on his quiet face.

And when she had returned to the old life where she could not but miss him, and Sophy saw how much she did so, the thought would come into her head that but for her this trouble might have been spared her mother. No word of reproof did Mrs. Gresham speak to Sophy, forbearing to add to the pain that she knew her daughter must be suffering, and she did wisely. The harshest treatment she could have been subjected to would never have made Sophy feel so repentant as the pale, sorrowing face of her mother did, and the remembrance of the sorrow she brought on that loved one is as a shield to her to withstand temptation. L. M. C.

SCRIPTURE ENIGMA.

1. Where turned the first of the Philistines' bands?
2. Whose son the gold and silver vessels weighed?
3. What half-built town was torn from Baasha's hands?
4. Whose son to Pul a thousand talents paid?
5. What town by Shamed, Elpaal's son, was built?
6. Whence in a basket Paul escaped by night?
7. Whose son Phinehas slew for daring guilt?
8. Where did the Syrians with David fight?
9. Where did the Lord great stones from heaven cast?
10. What Philistine was by Elhanan slain?
11. The town whence Peter unto Joppa passed.
12. Who did in Abram's time o'er Elam reign?
13. Whose words fresh courage unto Asa gave?
14. Whose son was roasted in the fire alive?
15. The stone where Jonathan his warning gave?

That Saul would fain his friend of life deprive.
 "Our God shall come," but not as once,
 In lowliness he came;
 He comes as judge, to punish those
 Who now despise his name.